



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Highway  
Administration**

# Rimini Road Project *Newsletter*

*Western Federal Lands Highway Division*

*Volume 1*

## Introduction

This is the first newsletter for the Rimini Road improvement project. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will be working very closely with Lewis and Clark County and the USDA Forest Service – Helena National Forest (HNF) to determine the best ways to improve the road from the junction of US 12 to the junction of the Chessman Reservoir Road, approximately 6 miles total length.

A number of environmental and engineering studies will be done over the next year to determine the most feasible alternative with the fewest negative impacts. More newsletters will be sent at regular intervals in the future to keep everyone with an interest in the Rimini Road Project updated as to the status of these studies and of the project in general.

We at Western Federal Lands Highway Division are confident that we can provide a quality project satisfying the requirements of all the project stakeholders.

## The Rimini Road Project

Montana Forest Highway Route 98, commonly known as Rimini Road, begins at an intersection with US12, approximately 10 miles west of Helena, and continues through the town of Rimini. This project involves improvements to the first six miles of this road, ending at the Chessman Reservoir junction.

Rimini Road provides primary access to 40,000 acres of National Forest Service (NFS) land on the Helena National Forest and secondary access to an additional 250,000 acres of NFS land on the Beaverhead-Deer

Lodge National Forest, as well as for contractors, miners, loggers, recreationists and tourists. This road is also a primary access for the residents along the road and in the town of Rimini. In addition, the EPA has been using the road for access to the cleanup of the old mine sites around the town of Rimini, which will likely continue for years to come.

Rimini Road provides access to the Ten Mile Creek Watershed, which is the primary source of drinking water for the City of Helena. Ten Mile Creek feeds the City's water supply intakes, and closely follows much of the project segment. The City's water treatment plant is located near the junction of US12.

The road is under the jurisdiction of the Helena National Forest with maintenance provided by Lewis and Clark County, and is open to public travel on a year-round basis.

Gravel surfacing exists along the length of the road. Dust, potholing



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## Western Federal Lands Highway Division

This project will be designed and constructed by Western Federal Lands Highway Division (WFLHD). WFLHD is a small branch of the Federal Highway Administration that is involved in the planning, design and construction of roads that provide safe and adequate transportation access to and through Federally owned lands.

Although the majority of our work is for the Forest Service, we also have projects with the National Park Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. WFLHD's jurisdiction includes five Northwestern states; Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana.

Our office is located in Vancouver, Washington (see contact names and address below).



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and wash-boarding of the gravel surface have been problems in the past. Recently, the EPA has provided a grant to the County for the application of magnesium chloride, which has temporarily abated many of these problems. The funding for this treatment is not expected to continue, and the associated problems and high maintenance costs to the County will resume.

The road is below design standards for the traffic type, volume and speed. The substandard design conditions, along with the gravel surface, have been cited as the cause for many of the reported accidents along this road.

The gravel surface also causes a high amount of sediment to enter Ten Mile Creek during runoff events and grading operations, resulting in stream turbidity.

The project proposes to provide an all-weather asphalt surface and upgrade the existing road geometry, and provide striping and signing to meet existing design and safety standards. The existing roadway centerline may be shifted slightly in some areas to move away from Ten Mile Creek. These changes will involve some roadway widening and some horizontal curve flattening. Three of the five bridges along the project segment have been determined to be substandard and will be replaced as part of this project. The other two were replaced in the early eighties after they were destroyed by floodwaters.

This project will help improve access to the National Forest Lands and the town of Rimini. It will improve the quality of the water and the air in the Ten

Mile Creek watershed by reducing the gravel roadway produced stream turbidity and dust. Upgrading the road to the current design standards will improve drivability and reduce the accident rate. Lewis and Clark County's valuable maintenance funds can be freed up to be used on other roadways in their jurisdiction.

The project is still in the early developmental stage, and many specific questions about the project can't be answered without further environmental and engineering investigation and design. All project stakeholders will have opportunities to voice their concerns and have an effect on the final projects.

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## Q&A



*This project was nominated by Lewis and Clark County in conjunction with the Helena National Forest.*

***Q: Where was the funding obtained for this project?***

**A:** The funding for this project is through Forest Highway Funds from the Public Lands Highway Program. This project was initially nominated by Lewis and Clark County in conjunction with the Helena National Forest. The nomination was evaluated and then accepted into the Forest Highway Program by members of a Tri-Agency committee, which include representatives from the State of Montana, The Forest Service, and the FHWA. The objective of the Forest Highway Program is to construct or to improve roads that connect our National Forests to the main state transportation network.

***Q: Why can't this money be used elsewhere in the County, where the need may be greater?***

**A:** The funding for this project is earmarked at the Federal level. It can only be used on road projects that meet a set of specific criteria. Lewis and Clark County and the Helena National Forest nominated this project based on prioritizing the needs of the roads in their jurisdictions that meet these criteria. Without their nomination, and the acceptance into the Forest Highway Program, the money would be lost to similar projects in other Counties, Forests or States.

***Q: At what point will the agencies involved take formal comment from the property owners and the public?***

**A:** The agencies will take comments from property owners and the public throughout the environmental clearance process. Prior to the preparation of an environmental document, our agency prepares a project checklist. The project checklist describes the need, scope, alternatives being considered, an initial esti-

mate of environmental resources, potential impacts, and related issues. The information in the checklist helps determine what kind of environmental document is required for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Typically, we conduct at least one public meeting during the checklist-phase. For the Rimini project, the checklist is currently scheduled to be completed in the spring/summer of 2002. Public involvement will also occur during the preparation of the environmental document.

***Q: When will specific roadway design documents be available?***

**A:** Preliminary documents should be available by early 2003. The intermediate design documents are scheduled to be completed by March of 2004, and the final documents by August of 2005. Construction is currently scheduled to begin in March of 2006.

***Q: How much is this going to cost?***

**A:** The early estimate to construct this project, based on widening, paving, some spot curve flattening, and replacement of three bridges, is approximately \$6 million. This estimate may change significantly after preparation of the environmental document.

***Q: What are the stakes in the ground and what were the survey crews doing last summer?***

**A:** The stakes are control points for the survey to establish existing topography and the existing roadway. These stakes are not related to any cut, fill, or right-of-way stakes.

## ***Project Schedule***

*The Proposed schedule for the project is as follows:*

<b>Public involvement</b>	<b>Ongoing throughout project</b>
<b>Topographical survey</b>	<b>Completed Fall of 2001</b>
<b>Environmental studies and documents</b>	<b>Spring of 2002 to Spring of 2003</b>
<b>Geotechnical exploration and testing</b>	<b>Summer of 2002 to Fall of 2002</b>
<b>Right-of-Way acquisition</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>Final roadway design completed</b>	<b>Fall of 2005</b>
<b>Construction</b>	<b>Starting Spring 2006</b>

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